

Message Text

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71L

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

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SAN JOSE FOR AGATT

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EPAP, ETRD, PN

SUBJECT: 1976 MEAT IMPORT PROGRAM

REF: A) EC BRUSSELS 1534; B) STATE 40234; C) PANAMA 0877

1. CONTACTS WITH AGRICULTURE VICE MINISTER GUSTAVO GONZALEZ AND AGRICULTURAL MARKETING INSTITUTE MEAT SPECIALIST DR. ROSENDO SAENZ INDICATE THAT THEY HAVE NOT RECEIVED ANY INFORMATION REGARDING EC MEAT IMPORTER SOCOPA'S CONTACTS WITH PANAMANIAN EMBASSY REPORTED IN REF (A). THEIR RESPONSE TO EMBOFF'S QUERY ABOUT THE FEASIBILITY OF SUCH SHIPMENTS WAS A REITERATION OF THE POSITION REPORTED IN REF (C). SMALL-SCALE, IRREGULAR PANAMANIAN MEAT SLAUGHTERING WOULD MITIGATE AGAINST PROFITABLE MEAT EXPORT TO THE EC UNLESS JOINT SHIPMENTS WITH COSTA COULD BE MADE.

2. COMMENT: THE IDEA OF THE EC AS A MARKET FOR PANAMANIAN BEEF IS NOT SELLING WELL HERE, EITHER WITH GOP OFFICIALS OR WITH PRIVATE MEAT EXPORTERS. THEY VIEW IT AS AN ALTERNATIVE THAT THEY HAVE PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED AND REJECTED AS UNWORKABLE. MEANWHILE, HOPE IS STILL EXPRESSED THAT THE US WILL SOMEHOW FIND A WAY TO INCREASE PANAMA'S 1976 QUOTA LEVAL AND THUS EASE THE CURRENT DOMESTIC MEAT SURPLUS. RECENT PROPOSALS BY

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AGRICULTURAL MARKETING INSTITUTE DRECTOR ALEJANDRO AYALA TO

ELIMINATE THE GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORT PRICE FOR MEAT ARE LINKED TO INCREASED EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES. OTHERWISE, ELIMINATION OF THE SUPPORT PRICE IN A MARKET SURPLUS SITUATION WOULD RUIN THE CATTLEMEN. PRO-GOVERNMENT "PANAMA AMERICA" HEADLINED IN A STORY ON FEBRUARY 24 THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER HAD PROMISED PRESIDENT ODUBER OF COSTA RICA THAT HE WOULD "INTERVENE WITH US GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES TO LOWER THE RESTRICTIONS ON THE EXPORTS OF COSTA RICAN BEEF AND SUGAR TO THE US." THIS STORY HAS BEEN INTERPRETED HERE AS INDICATING THAT SUCH RELIEF MIGHT ALSO BE AVAILABLE FOR PANAMA.

JORDEN

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